

Good morning, thank you Chairman Merkley and Ranking Member Mullin. I appreciate the invitation to speak today. My name is Angelle Bradford. I am a volunteer with the Delta Chapter of the Sierra Club and also a Doctoral Candidate earning my degree in the areas of physiology and medicine. I am a Southern girl in every way; I feel like my heart is always somewhere between New Orleans and Bay St. Louis, as my family has been in south Louisiana and Mississippi for generations. I love life in South Louisiana, though it is a complicated life, where basic dignity of life and human rights are always being challenged. It can be disorienting to juxtapose my life experiences and love for my home with my state's national rankings which are among the lowest in many quality-of-life metrics. But I believe we can do better. When I look out across the Pontchartrain or Atchafalaya Basin, I am affirmed that we must do better.

I am here today to talk with you about what a dear friend of mine calls “the illusion of separation.” While some folks may see oil and gas on the one hand, and plastics on the other, as very different issues that require different solutions, I see them as one-and-the same: that is, the same companies reaping profits from all ends of the supply chain, from cradle to the grave. I mean that literally, in the sense of their product offerings, and morbidly, in the sense that it is we — the citizens of my state and this country — whom they are sacrificing in the process. And I’m left to wonder, to which part of the plastics life cycle, to the oil and gas industry, are we ready to sacrifice our dreams and desires? To which part are we ready to give up our health and our lives? I am no longer willing to offer up our quality of life for the plastics industry.

Unfortunately, after decades of inaction, time is not on our side. In south Louisiana, climate change is already here. Our spring and summer nights and afternoons are getting hotter, which makes it harder to cool off at nighttime and prepare for the next hot day. I experience frequent migraines and asthma attacks from poor air quality days and beyond the sheer record number of major hurricanes that hit our state in the last few years, there is no national insurance market prepared to serve as a safety net for any of us and our different disasters. It is literally, already becoming unlivable in a state that is already unstable and a wild card in the Deep South. I would like to own a home and have a family one day. I am not sure how any of this is even reasonable or possible. When it comes to my work, I think about how weeks to months can be lost to a hurricane that quickly strengthens overnight and leaves me little time to prepare myself or power down my active experiments. . And I think about how much the affordances and assurances our communities are made around our energy and utility systems go out the window when we most need them most. Consequently, I am fully in agreement that we need to move away from integrating these industries and plastics into our everyday lives.

Now, the same industry most responsible for the knowingly exacerbating climate change — the industry that dominates public policy and politics in my home state — is unleashing yet another catastrophe on the planet: this time in the form of plastics.

Per Defend Our Health’s recent study, PET ( polyethylene terephthalate,) plastic releases 1, 4- dioxane during plastics production into drinking water. 1,4-dioxane is a heterocyclic

ether used as a polar industrial solvent and is released as waste discharges (Kikani, et al, 2022). Besides being a carcinogen, it can damage cells in the liver, kidney, and respiratory system, according to the Minnesota Department of Health. Additionally in the report from Defend Our Health, they spoke to the dangers of ethylene oxide which is a known human carcinogen responsible for nearly 80% of cancer risk due to hazardous air pollutants. We talk a lot about cancer, but many diseases, such as kidney failure, lead to drastically different qualities of life. And as we discover new chemicals, we recognize their power to damage organs and cells, with more and more studies beginning to help decision makers and practitioners think through cumulative effects of exposure to these chemicals. Oftentimes, any given person does not live next to or breathe the air of just one plant's emissions, there may be multiple plants clustered together. And any one of us exposed to the water and discharges of that plant is also drinking from plastic bottles or swimming in polluted streams or eating food from soil that has been contaminated. It has historically been difficult to study the cumulative effects of polluted air, soil, and water at the same time particularly because it is unethical, within the lab context, to just give people plastics-derived carcinogens and chemicals and see what happens. But also, people move and have different exposures and stressors that complicate understanding of disease processes. But it does not take a rocket scientist or a chemist to have regard for the fact that risk and exposure over time mean increased likelihood of diseases that Americans are being diagnosed with each day. When we think about life in this country, something we often debate, we need to also think about the dignity of life we are offering when we are allowing these companies to inadvertently raise our healthcare costs and poison our people.